

# Careless Wishes, a hunger games fanfic | FanFiction

*Everyone would be better off if you weren't here, I wish I didn't love you.*

The words slip from my mouth carelessly.

I wish I could blame the shards of shiny nostalgia mixed in with our painful history, but I really can't and I know that she knows this. She's seen enough episodes in the last year to know when it is the hijacking talking and when it is me. The words are undeniably mine - I am present, it is me, it is the Peeta she knows and has recently admitted she loves who is tearing her apart and wishing for something that I truly don't want undone.

She shuts down, I watch as it happens. Her proud shoulders slump and the light leaves her eyes. I've given voice to her biggest fears. The nightmares I usually hold at bay I have thrown at her and made her face. I've confirmed what she already believes and what I've fought so hard for her to let go of.

*I know.*

She breathes the words as she turns and leaves.

I don't follow after her, I'm still walking the line between sanity and falling off the precipice into the awaiting hallucination. It's a fine line, always present, always looming as a possibility. In times like this, when I'm so close to being consumed by the shiny beast that is the lingering effect of the hijacking, I am most unstable. I am me, my words are mine, but they are highlighted by an anger I cannot control. I may not seem so, yet I am rational enough to know that I have hurt her.

She is hurting and it is my fault.

However, when I'm straddling this line it is hard to make myself care, no matter how much I know I should.

I ease myself into bed and let my anger wrap around me like a tight blanket. Swaddled in rage and pent up with the possibility of a murderous episode, it's best I try to sleep it off. I won't go to her tonight and she won't come to me.

I don't know what the morning holds, and I don't have the energy to contemplate it.

Moonlight streams through the window and I focus on the eerie light casting shadows on the wall. It reminds me of my father, of the way in which he would comfort me when I was a child and the shadows became monsters.

I miss him.

I miss them.

Sometimes, I even miss *her* because as terrible as my mother was, no one deserves to burn to death.

Was what I said to Katniss true? Did I mean it?

I fear in this moment that I may have meant it. The pressure of unshed tears wells up behind my eyes and I give into it, sobbing. I remember and I hurt and I am engulfed in sadness.

The anger is so much easier than the melancholy.

---

It isn't anything in particular that wakes me. Morning light is just faintly creeping through the window. I feel sticky with sweat - it's hot in here, but that's not unusual.

The size of the bed is the first thing that alerts me that something is off. The next is that when I stretch my body - arms over my head and toes pointed in an effort to shake away the sleep - that I notice I can feel legs, not just a leg. It's not a phantom sensation, this is much different. When my eyes adjust to the darkness of the room, I realize that I see ten fleshy toes wiggling at the end of the bed.

Ten.

Not five flesh and five bionic.

Ten flesh and blood toes attached to my feet which are attached to my legs.

Legs. I have legs again. My lower appendages are plural.

This must be a dream.

I sit up with a start and look to either side of me. I'm in my room above the bakery. It has to be a dream because I haven't been in this room

since long before District 12 burned and I moved my stuff from here to Victor's Village. I lay back down and will myself to wake up.

Then I hear his voice. *My father.*

"Peeta!" He calls, bellowing from the bottom of the stairs like I've heard a thousand times before. I close my eyes and enjoy the way his voice warms my entire being. When he calls me again I allow myself to remember and enjoy times past, before I was reaped twice and then turned into a Capitol mutt.

"Peeta!" There is my name again, my father's deep baritone reverberating up the stairway and into my room. It was pleasant at first, this dream of my father, but now there is an ache deep in my chest as the awareness settles over me that this is just a dream and when I wake he will be ash again

"Peeta, I know you hear me, son. It's time for you to get up."

I scrub my hand over my face and shake my head back and forth, but awareness does not come, and the lines of this dream do not even waver. This is the most realistic dream I have ever had. I'd fear it was a hallucination and I was in the midst of an episode if the dream were not so mundane.

I dress hastily, splashing water on my face and rubbing mint paste on my teeth before descending the stairs. With my fingertips, I skim the faded paper on the wall. There is a snag in the paper that catches my index finger and slits the skin. *Shit.* Even in dreams, a paper cut stings like hell.

Nothing could prepare me for what I see when I reach the bottom of the stairs. I'm in our old kitchen, the one that is adjacent with the bakery. My dad leans over the countertop, nursing a mug of weak tea

and chewing on a piece of stale toast. The details are all there, everything from his receding hairline to the chipped handle of the mug from when I dropped it at age twelve, nerves over my first reaping making me jittery.

"Sleep well, son?" he greets me, as if he wasn't dust floating in the wind, as if it hasn't been almost two years since we have seen one another, as if I didn't celebrate my last birthday with only my hallucinations and memories to keep me company.

Before I can think that it is odd and stop myself, I reach out and pat his face. His eyes, blue like mine but with enough flecks of green that they sometimes appear different, crinkle in amusement.

"Dad?" I poke at his chest with my index finger. He is solid - so much so that I begin to doubt that he was ever taken from me. "You seem so real."

He chuckles. I can feel it in my fingertip - his laughter - so stout and full of life, it's like he is really in front of me. He laughs again, a hearty sound that is a joy to hear, before covering my hand on his cheek with his own.

"Well, I certainly hope so." He pats my hand before shaking his head and stepping away. "There is some tea in the kettle and some bread in the box."

"If the boy is going to sleep the day away, do you really think he earned breakfast?" I'd know that voice anywhere. Only *my* mother would think that sleeping late warranted having a breakfast of stretched tea leaves and stale bread withheld. My dad doesn't acknowledge her, but he doesn't refute her statement, either. Instead he waves his hand in the air and disappears into the bakery.

I ignore my mother and follow my dad through the doors leading into the back of the bakery. He is bent over a slab of dough. "Just ignore her son, she's just in a tizzy because sales are down." He addresses me without turning to look at me. Simply being with my dad has a calming effect on me, however, I'm ready to wake up. The longer I'm stuck in this dream the more I realize how much I need to make things right with Katniss. It's as if the tracker jacker venom never poisoned my veins. I feel more rational than I have in a long time.

Dad knows how I feel about Katniss - he would razz me in the way that only a father can when she came to trade - so he'll understand that I need to see her. That's what it feels like, like if I can find Katniss and apologize to her then I'll wake up. It's like a mission I have to accomplish before achieving lucidity, as if my subconscious is holding me in this dream state as a means of punishing me for treating her so poorly.

"Dad, uh, when do you think Katniss will be by to trade?" As soon as the words leave my mouth my mother interrupts.

"Seam trash, now Capitol trash! Why on earth would you mention that slut in our home?"

I should have been more careful and realized she would follow us into the bakery. My dad looks at me, his face twisted in an emotion I can't discern. But his humor is gone and he looks almost confused, as if he doesn't even know who Katniss is. It must be my mother's words that have upset him. It's not the first time I've heard her call Katniss *Seam trash*, but why is she calling her *Capitol trash*? What does that mean?

I really need to wake up. This isn't fun anymore.

I start shaking my head back and forth trying to regain consciousness. My dad watches me with concern but my mom rolls her eyes and

excuses herself to go to town. I'm starting to panic. This dream seems real, but I know it isn't real. Right?

"She has no right to talk about Katniss that way." The words come out laced with anger and my dad places a hand on my shoulder in an attempt to calm me.

His hand slips between my shoulders and he starts rubbing hard circles on my back. "Peeta, are you feeling okay?"

"I just need to talk to Katniss, then everything will be okay," I assure my father in an effort to compose myself. The urgency to talk to her is growing stronger the longer I stand here and I am filled with a sense of dread. What is going on?

My dad gives me a funny look at the mention of Katniss and opens his mouth to say something, but he's interrupted by the sound of the back bell. Relief washes over me. I must be dreaming about before we were reaped and everything changed, it has to be that. Katniss will be standing on the other side of the door, and I can apologize and then wake up.

I watch as my dad pulls open the door, holding my breath and hoping to see the woman I love. I'm no longer mad at her and the longer I stay in this dream the more trepidation begins to creep into my stomach.

I can't believe I went to bed without apologizing to her.

I have to make it right. I have to wake up.

But instead of who I was expecting, Gale Hawthorne stands on our back porch, squirrels in hand and ready to trade. It's definitely not Katniss, but his presence isn't a bad thing. I can trust Gale. We've

played enough games of real or not real that I know despite the painful history he and Katniss share, he has no ill will towards me.

"Gale." I say his name and he looks up at me, confused. His face seems different but the same - younger than the last time I saw him, but war has aged us all. I must be seeing the Gale that used to trade with dad in the mornings. "God, it's good to see you, Gale." The words rush out of my mouth at the same moment that his sets in a hard line. He looks hurt and angry. I'm not sure what is going on any more.

In this reality I guess we never came to an impasse, but I know down deep that he's a good guy. I don't think he'll begrudge me anything.

I try again, "Hey, man, I was wondering-"

"Peeta!" My dad interrupts sharply, "Rory, I apologize for my son's bad manners. He's not feeling like himself today." Dad shoves two fresh loaves of bread into Gale's - *Rory's*? - arms and pushes him out the door without bothering to take the squirrels.

When dad turns back around he looks angrier than I can ever remember seeing him. "Now I don't know what has gotten into you, but I didn't raise you to be cruel. You know as well as I do what we owe Gale Hawthorne's family! How dare you speak to his brother like that? Without Gale's sacrifice you wouldn't be standing in this room with me."

Not once does my father refer to Gale in the present tense. "What happened to Gale? Where is he?" I demand. I have to know what I have set into motion with my words. Who have I unwittingly condemned with my careless wish? My family is safe, but who isn't?

"He's in the pine box sent back from the Capitol."



I am taken aback by dad's words. It's what I was expecting, that he was dead. But I did not expect the Capitol to be involved, not in this dream where Gale is not yet a player in war. The Rebellion hasn't happened, my dad wouldn't be standing here explaining it to me if it had. Noticing my confusion, my dad's face softens, "Come on now, son, you were there just like me. He took your place, Peeta."

The air is suddenly sucked from the room and everything is spins. My dad continues, "When they pulled your name, Gale volunteered to go to the Games with the Everdeen girl. She came back alive, and he came back in that damned box. And even though there is a marker for him in the cemetery, I heard that the Everdeen girl somehow made arrangements for his body to be laid to rest beyond the fence."

I've heard enough. I have to find Katniss and apologize. It must be the only way out of this hellish dream. I'm learning that nightmares aren't always filled with physical pain, blackness, and mutts. Sometimes an altered reality is just as excruciating.

"Peeta, son, I really think you should go lie down." There is concern etched into my dad's face, but I don't have time to worry about it. I have to find Katniss. I have to make this right.

Without looking behind me I push through the back doors and rush to the Hob. It's the only place I can think to go - Katniss's home away from home. Ignoring the sideways glances and dirty looks, I enter anyways. I'm not sure who or what I'm looking for until I bump into Greasy Sae's granddaughter sitting on a stool in front of a piece of plywood that doubles as a soup counter. It's not Sae behind the counter though, it's another woman I don't recognize. I try my luck.

"Excuse me, do you know where I could find Katniss Everdeen?"

The woman looks at me with disgust written all over her face. "Probably under some Capitolite. Maybe even down on her knees in front of him. *Slut*." She mutters the last part under her breath, but I hear it. What she is insinuating is unthinkable, but not unheard of...Have I condemned Katniss to a life like Finnick's?

I slam my fist down on the counter.

"Don't you talk-" The words have barely left my mouth before I am roughly shoved aside. The push knocks me down and it takes me a minute to catch my breath before I realize that it's Haymitch who is now up in the woman's face, berating her angrily.

"You are so quick to judge her, but she protects this whole District with her actions." He points his finger menacingly in the vendor's face. "You have no clue what you are talking about so I suggest you shut the fuck up!"

A Peacekeeper, the red-headed one, arrives and pulls Haymitch away. I follow right behind them. Maybe Haymitch has the answers I need. He'll know where I can find Katniss, which house she inhabits in Victor's Village.

"Haymitch, please, I need to talk with Katniss!" The desperation in my voice is pathetic, but it makes him turn around.

His eyes meet mine resigned, "Do yourself a favor, boy. Forget the girl. She's unreachable now." He addresses me like we've never met, like he doesn't know who I am, and in this world it's true. He doesn't know me except as the boy who Gale Hawthorne replaced. Haymitch doesn't say any more, just turns around and allows the Peacekeeper to lead him to his home.

I follow. I'm headed there anyway, to Victor's Village. I must find Katniss.

We pass through town square and it's good to see that Thread's handiwork was never built, to learn that Cray must still be in charge. As despicable as the man is, he is a saint compared to the one who replaced him. But then again, this is one small positive in a sea of negatives. Because of me wishing that I didn't love Katniss, I might of prevented District 12 from burning but it also means that we are still an oppressed nation. No Rebellion, means no freedom.

It's a hard pill to swallow, that my careless words have undone so much good. I am disgusted with myself.

Then she materializes. Katniss. *My Katniss.*

She is dressed in Capitol finery - no question that Cinna designed the tight-fitted skirt and jacket set. Rushing towards Haymitch and the Peacekeeper is the girl I've been seeking since I woke up above the bakery, I watch in awe as she approaches. "I'll take him from here, Darius," she assures the Peacekeeper, who nods and then turns away. Katniss wraps her arm around Haymitch's waist and I see my chance - dressed like that, there is no way she'll be able to escort him all the way home.

"Katniss!" I call. She doesn't turn around or acknowledge that she heard me. I know that she did, though, even if she doesn't turn to look.

"Katniss!" I call again, and this time she looks back at me. "Wait up! Let me help."

Her eyes blaze in my direction.

"I don't need your help."

She continues to walk away from me and I feel myself panic. I don't know what else to say to convince her to speak to me. "Please, Katniss, I just want to apologize."

This catches her attention. Her arm drops from around Haymitch's waist and she stomps toward me. "I don't need your apologies," she spits. She's barely recognizable up close - there are little nuances to her face that are different. Her lips are fuller and her nose has obviously been enhanced by the Capitol. It takes my breath away to realize that her facial features are not the only thing that have been altered, either. Her body is full and curvy, her chest protrudes and her hips are rounded. They've changed her. She really has been made into a Capitol plaything like Finnick. She is a... a *Capitol whore*.

The words catch in my throat and I am momentarily unable to meet her eyes, but when I do there is an emptiness there. And sorrow. My Katniss is gone.

"I'm just...so sorry." The words crack as they leave my lips. I watch as something flits across her face - she pities me.

"You can let it go, Peeta. It was never about you." She stops speaking and turns to leave. "He did it for me."

The last words are so faint that I almost don't catch them. She thinks I am apologizing for Gale and she has absolved me of that. I don't deserve it, though, because I am the one who wished for this alternate reality where I never loved her and someone else played my part in the Games.

I don't know what else to do. I apologized, but it didn't work. I am still here, stuck to relieve the nightmare of what could have been for who knows how long.

My feet are frozen where I stand, unable to move forward. I watch as Katniss gathers Haymitch and walks away.

*What have I done?*

---

There is discourse between the doctors about how she never leaves his side. The girl that was deemed mad and found guilty of assassinating one president when she was supposed to be executing a tyrant. Some believe that the cost to her mental state is too much - she is fragile and they believe that it hurts her more than it helps him. Others believe it is her voice that keeps him tethered to the earthly plane, preventing his body from giving itself completely to another existence.

She's the one who found him when he didn't wake up, breathing but stagnant. Stuck in some unseen realm, untouchable.

Despite this information, she waits by his bedside. Sometimes singing, other times twisting the end of her hair - not yet long enough to wear in her signature braid - but at all times hovering protectively over the comatose boy.

Katniss can feel the doctors watching her but it doesn't matter. Only *he* matters. He has to come back to her. He promised they would face the world together, *always*. It's been days now, and she never thought she would return to the cold, dark space that District 13 inhabits, but she is here and won't leave until he awakens.

He mumbles in his sleep, unintelligible words through chapped lips, and it gives her hope because she thinks she hears her name. There is twitching and moving and then a heavy sigh. Her eyes remain locked on his face, willing his eyes to open.

And then they do.

Small slits of blue, the darkness of the room muting their usual vibrancy. He tries to speak but air only whooshes from between his lips, garbled, his breath sour from days of not being used. Katniss climbs into the bed, wrapping her arms around him and hushing the phrase he desperately needs to get out. When her head finds the place on his chest where she was meant to fit, her ear resting on his chest right over his heart, she feels the words before she hears them.

*I'm sorry*, mumbled into the hair on top of her head.

---

This was my entry for the '*Write Me a Story Hunger Games Challenge*'...surprisingly, it won the 'Judges First Pick'. Thank you to Ro, for hosting the challenge, A for pre-reading, and the judges for the time they spent reading all the entries. Please visit the site on tumblr and check out all the fantastic submissions, there are some you won't want to miss!

Let me know what you think, this is my first foray into writing since FS ended and I'm anxious to know how it turned out! THANKS!